

## Friendship Heights TMD Advisory Committee Meeting

Summary – Meeting of January 13, 2009

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### Voting Members Present

April Birnbaum	Lerch, Early and Brewer, Representing New England Development
Leonard Grant	Friendship Heights Village Council
William P. Farley	Town of Somerset
David Glass	Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Mary Herman	Polinger Shannon and Luchs (Employer of greater than 50)
N. Leslie Olson	Chevy Chase Land Company
Robert Schwarzbart (Chair)	Friendship Heights Village Council
R. Mallory Starr (Vice Chair)	Somerset House Management Association
David Viertels	EagleBank (Employer of fewer than 50)

### Non-Voting Members Present

Sandra L. Brecher	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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### TMD Staff Present

Jim Carlson	DOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
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### Absent

Chief Roy Gordon	Chevy Chase Village Police
Capt. Russell Hamill	Montgomery County Police
Charles Kines	M-NCPPC
Gregory Knoop	Oudens Knoop Knoop + Sachs Architects (Employer of fewer than 50)
Bill McCloskey	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
Jessica Moore	The JBG Companies
Carlean Russell	Saks Fifth Avenue (Employer of greater than 50)
Kenneth Williams	GEICO

### Guests

Fred Delacruz	Saks Fifth Avenue
Tiffany Gee	Chevy Chase Land Company
Leslie Hamm	Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center
Bob Joiner	The Agenda News
Julian Mansfield	Village of Friendship Heights

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**Items 1,2,3 – Introductions, Review Approval of December's minutes, Chair's Comments.** Members and guests introduced themselves.

The minutes from the December meeting were approved, with changes.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** announced that all street and sidewalk repaving in the Village of Friendship Heights was completed in December. This is relevant because a lot of traffic moves through the area, particularly traffic along Wisconsin Avenue that cuts through the Village using Willard Avenue, The Hills Plaza and other streets to get to River Road and other points south. Any traffic tie-ups on these streets have an impact beyond Friendship Heights.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** recognized Julian Mansfield, Friendship Heights Village Manager, for bringing the repaving project to completion on time and within budget.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** thanked Vice Chair **Mallory Starr** for attending the upcoming February 3<sup>rd</sup> budget recommendations meeting with **County Executive Leggett**. **Mr. Schwarzbart** will be unable to attend due to a prior commitment.

Certificates of Appreciation were presented to **Leslie Olson**, The Chevy Chase Land Company, and to **Carlean Russell**, Saks Fifth Avenue from **County Executive Leggett** (certificates were unavailable at the December meeting). **Fred Delacruz** accepted for **Ms. Russell**.

**Item 5 - FY10 Budget Recommendations:** **Mr. Schwarzbart** noted that **Stephen Petruccelli** had not yet arrived, so proceeded with discussion of the FY 10 budget recommendations. **Mr. Schwarzbart** said that the introductory letter to the County Executive, as well as the attached recommendations will need a fair amount of re-working. **Mr. Carlson** and **Mr. Schwarzbart** will meet in the days following the meeting to re-write the letter, in concurrence and with input from the rest of the committee. **Mr. Schwarzbart** added that some of the requested items may be struck or revised, in light of the current budget crisis.

It may also be necessary to re-order the priorities, with greater emphasis on those items of direct service to the public. For example, the first item, which involves staffing for the new commuter store, is not as important as pedestrian safety and may be more appropriate farther down the list.

**David Glass** added that he sees the commuter store as more of a ‘frill’, especially in times of fiscal restraint, and that the County is not deriving the full benefit that it could from the space housing the store.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** stated that the store will provide a service to the community, especially as a place to purchase SmarTrip cards without having to travel to Metro Center. **Mr. Glass** noted that SmarTrip cards can now be purchased at CVS stores.

**Revisit Item 4 – Stephen Petruccelli Remarks:** **Mr. Schwarzbart** stated that **Mr. Petruccelli** had arrived and suggested that the budget recommendations discussion be temporarily tabled.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** welcomed **Mr. Petruccelli** back before the committee. **Mr. Petruccelli** has been a good friend to the community, especially at a time when the bus station was in imminent danger of permanently closing due to the need for ceiling renovations to accommodate newer buses.

**Mr. Petruccelli** thanked the committee for its patience in dealing with the bus station ceiling issues, and calling WMATA’s attention to the problem. The Friendship Heights terminal is the only one in the system with a ceiling height that low. However, working closely with the committee members and with WMATA engineering and construction staff, permanent closure of the station was averted. **Mr. Petruccelli** appreciated the help and input in resolving this issue.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** expressed appreciation for **Mr. Petruccelli’s** efforts and the efforts of WMATA in keeping the station open. It would have been very difficult for the community had it remained closed.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** extended a standing invitation for **Mr. Petruccelli** to return for a future meeting, since it appears he may be staying in the area to pursue post-retirement opportunities. The committee offered a round of applause as a thank you for **Mr. Petruccelli’s** efforts on behalf of the community.

**Item 5 – FY10 Budget Recommendations (continued):** Committee members discussed revisions to last year’s FY09 budget priorities list.

The following changes to the priority list were approved by concurrence of the committee:

**(1) “Provide Adequate Funding to Open and Staff the Commuter Store in the New Chevy Chase Land Company Retail Development”**

- Add bullets that include the \$1 per year lease cost to the County, proximity to bus station, the imminent opening of Wisconsin Place and recent fare changes to WMATA and Ride On, including the mandated use of SmarTrip cards for transfers.

**(2) “Promote Employee Transit Use Through Continued Funding of Super Fare Share”**

- Moved up from priority number four in FY09.

**(3) “Improve Ride On Service”**

- Cut all previous bulleted items from FY09 and replace with: “Continue to study methods of improving Ride On service with the application of new technologies, such as GPS and other vehicle tracking systems.”

**(4) “Enhance Pedestrian Safety”**

- Eliminate FY09 ADA references, crosswalk signal activation buttons and island cut-throughs.
- Make a general statement regarding adequate crossing times for mobility-impaired.

**(5) “Promote Car Sharing”**

- Provision of commercial parking spaces for car sharing vehicles and requirement that new developments provide car sharing spaces (repeating FY09 request).

**COMMENTS:**

**(1) David Glass** reiterated the objection to opening the TRiPS store, noting that if all that the store is going to do is sell SmarTrip cards and passes, CVS stores and other outlets can now do that. There is no need for a separate facility.

**Ms. Brecher** stated that selling passes was just one facet of the store operations – it also serves as marketing and outreach function, as well as a base of operations for the TMD. Also, there is more training involved for the commuter store staff than for an outlet that simply sells passes, since often times customers also have questions regarding its use plus other transit-related questions that outlets such as CVS or the county liquor store may not be able to answer. Many questions involve the use of the transit system, and how to get from point A to point B.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** called for a vote on the first item – to open and staff the TRiPS Commuter Store. Eight of nine members present voted in favor of keeping the item; one vote against.

**(2)** The committee agreed to move continued funding of the Super Fare Share program to second priority and to ask for funding to continue at the present level and to expand the description to include its purpose: to promote transit use.

**(3)** Updates needed to Ride On routes to reflect changes/discontinuations. **Ms. Brecher** noted that most Ride On buses have GPS transmitters installed and that these have been helpful in keeping buses from “bunching” on their routes, and also to alert bus drivers when they are running “hot” or ahead of schedule. **Ms. Brecher** recommended keeping this aspect of the Ride On budget recommendation.

**Mallory Starr** recommended that there be one broad statement in support of continuing study of Ride On to improve service, and eliminate most of the route and other details in the current FY09 document.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** suggested this be stated in such a way to include the application of new technologies.

**(4)** ADA ramps have been installed in most major locations, especially along Wisconsin Avenue, along with countdown timers and audible pedestrian signals. Since there is currently no specific intersection or area of concern regarding ADA accessibility, the committee agreed to omit that specific request from the priorities list and make a general statement in support of providing adequate crossing times.

**(5)** **Ms. Brecher** stated it would be helpful to include the provision of car sharing spaces, since the county is in the process of submitting a Request For Proposal to use publically available spaces for car sharing. It is useful to have something on record indicating public support for the effort. **Ms. Brecher** clarified that car sharing is different

from car pooling in that car sharing involves the use of short-term rentals. Car sharing provisions have been included in several developer traffic mitigation agreements with the county.

**Ms. Brecher** added that car sharing supports transit use by providing short term use of a vehicle for people who normally rely on transit, and who may need to get to a private appointment at a location not served by transit.

The committee agreed to drop the FY09 request for subsidizing carpools from the current budget document. **Ms. Brecher** noted that, given the difficulties of the upcoming budget year, any new initiatives such as this will be unlikely to receive funding.

**Mr. Schwarzbart** and **Mr. Carlson** will incorporate committee changes into the budget priorities document.

**Item 5 – Other Business:** **Mr. Carlson** called attention to letters in the meeting packet that were sent to employers advising of the need to exchange excess Metrocheks for Vouchers; the mailing included a Voucher Fact Sheet and Exchange Form.

There was a second mailing to employers regarding transit activities related to Inauguration Day, with an enclosed Telework Fact Sheet and promotion of other driving alternatives. The letter also promoted the Commuter Services web page, which has the latest transportation information and news for the January 20<sup>th</sup> event. **Ms. Brecher** added that the County has also created a special web page for the inauguration, with a link to the Commuter Services page. The site contains information related to all transportation related options for the event, not limited to commuters trying to get to work. Montgomery County will be open for Inauguration Day.

**Ms. Brecher** announced that Ride On's December ridership rose 5.2% compared to December of 2007 and continues to climb.

**Mr. Carlson** added that, with regard to the River Road shelter issue, he had contacted the DDOT representative responsible. DDOT will discuss with its contractor for shelters to explore the possibility of moving.

Meeting adjourned at 10:10 AM

Next meeting date: February 10, 2009